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SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY BURN'S SEPTEMBER 25, 2009
CONVERSATION WITH SALVADORAN FOREIGN MINISTER HUGO MARTINEZ

Classified By: Classified by WHA Assistant Secretary Thomas A. Shannon for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (U) September 25, 2009; 18:00; New York, USA.

12. (U) Participants:

U.S.
Under Secretary for Political Affairs William Burns
WHA Assistant Secretary Thomas Shannon
Bert Kraaimoore (Notetaker)

EL SALVADOR
Foreign Minister Hugo Martinez
UN PermRep Carmen Maria Gallardo
Chief of Cabinet Tanya Molina
UN Mission Political Officer Jose Monterrey

13. (C) SUMMARY. Salvadoran Foreign Minister Hugo Martinez stressed the desire of the GoES to strengthen the bilateral relationship through continued cooperation in military relations and initiatives such as Pathways to Prosperity and Merida. He also provided his perspective on the current crisis in Honduras now that President Manuel Zelaya has returned to Tegucigalpa. The foreign minister expressed Salvadoran hopes for U.S. immigration reform and another extension of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program for Salvadorans living in the United States. He inquired if the United States could assist El Salvador with equipment upgrades and new missions for Salvadoran peacekeeping forces and whether an official visit by President Mauricio Funes is possible. Asked about Salvadoran recognition of Kosovo, Martinez responded that he is optimistic. END SUMMARY.

GoES Seeks Even Greater Cooperation

14. (C) Martinez began by emphasizing the priority the GoES places upon strengthening bilateral relations with the United States, saying that we must work together to confront crime and narcotics trafficking. He stated that heavy emphasis on the Merida Initiative in the north and Plan Colombia in the south had put pressure on drug traffickers and caused them to focus more on Central America. Noting this situation calls for greater bilateral cooperation, Martinez said the Funes government wishes to continue counter-narcotics and military cooperation, both within and beyond the Merida Initiative framework. He also said that El Salvador wants to contribute more to the Pathways to Prosperity initiative. He said El Salvador is looking forward to the Pathways ministerial in

December in Costa Rica. However, he wondered how Honduras would be treated at this ministerial. A/S Shannon noted that Costa Rica had taken over the working group originally assigned to Honduras, and that the de facto regime would not be invited to the ministerial.

Honduras - It's Complicated

15. (C) U/S Burns asked for the Salvadoran perspective on the current crisis in Honduras. Martinez stressed that the situation is very complicated and expressed concern for the Honduran people. He noted the importance of applying surgical pressure on the appropriate points on both sides of the conflict and the need to work within the terms of the San Jose Accord. Martinez stated that if a solution is not found by the time of the presidential elections slated for November 29, further problems would ensue as some Central American countries would likely recognize the results and some would not. He emphasized that the Honduran dilemma is particularly complicated for El Salvador given the long common border, border disputes, and significant trade between the two countries. Martinez asserted that the GoES had been surprised by Zelaya's return. He stated that Zelaya had called him when Zelaya's plane landed at the Comalapa airport in El Salvador on the evening of September 20, the day before Zelaya appeared in Tegucigalpa, and had said he would see him in New York City for the UN General Assembly.

Views on OAS Mission to Honduras

16. (C) Martinez expressed support for an OAS mission to Honduras, but stated that its relevance would depend on whether it would be possible to get both sides to sign the San Jose Accord. If it appears that the Accord will not be signed, then the mission is unnecessary and possibly even dangerous, as the de facto regime could misrepresent the mission's presence as recognition by the international community of the de facto regime's legitimacy. Martinez stated that the OAS technical mission visit to El Salvador is an important step in testing the waters for a potential solution in Honduras. He added that El Salvador stands ready to participate in an OAS mission to Honduras.

Immigration - Hope to See Reform

17. (C) Martinez stated the GoES hopes to see an immigration reform bill passed soon in the United States. If a reform bill is not achievable in the near future, Martinez expressed hope that the TPS program for Salvadorans in the United States will be extended again next year. The foreign minister said that the Funes administration is taking a new approach to immigration issues by investing in the places of origin of Salvadoran immigrants. By promoting work, health, and housing opportunities, the GoES hopes to provide Salvadorans with incentives to stay in El Salvador.

Salvadoran Requests

18. (C) Martinez reiterated the GoES' wish for a state visit by President Funes. U/S Burns stated we share that desire, but that there is some difficulty in pinning down a date given the White House's crowded domestic agenda. UN PermRep Carmen Maria Gallardo stated that the Salvadoran Ministry of Defense wants to explore the possibility of U.S. military equipment assistance to enable greater Salvadoran participation in peacekeeping missions. U/S Burns noted that El Salvador has demonstrated its willingness and ability to participate in peacekeeping missions through its involvement with UNAFIL.

Kosovo Recognition

19. (C) U/S Burns urged Salvadoran recognition of Kosovo. Martinez responded that he is optimistic. He noted that Embassy San Salvador had offered to send him an update on Kosovo recognition and stated that once the GoES has that information they can take up the issue.

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